

U.N., Bowing to Soviets, Halts Its Baltic Contacts

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UNITED NATIONS, Jan. 10 — Bowing to Soviet pressure, the United Nations Secretariat has agreed to suspend the informal contacts it has conducted for several months with Baltic nationalist groups seeking independence from Moscow, a senior official has announced.

The United Nations decision comes on the eve of President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's visit to Lithuania, which was annexed by Stalin in 1940 along with Estonia and Latvia. The goal of Mr. Gorbachev's trip is to investigate the reasons for the Lithuanian Communist Party's decision to secede from the Soviet Communist Party.

The Secretariat's decision to stop meeting with Baltic nationalists when they visit New York was discussed by Assistant Secretary General James O. C. Jonah in an interview with The Toronto Globe and Mail earlier this week and confirmed by other officials

today.

In the interview, Mr. Jonah, who had been a central figure in the Baltic talks, said the Soviet Union was angered when The New York Times published an article about the contacts in December. "The Soviets were very angry," he was quoted as saying. "Now we won't talk with any of them." Mr. Jonah is traveling and could not be reached for comment.

Calls It Embarrassing

In the interview, he accused Baltic nationalist leaders of exploiting their contacts with the United Nations and said "they really embarrassed the Secretary General."

The contacts were never publicly announced by any official of the United Nations.

The United Nations decision to end the contacts with the Baltic nationalists provoked an angry reaction from Baltic Americans who accused the organization of failing to defend the ideals of freedom and self-determina-

tion in its charter.

"This is a shocking submission to Soviet pressure which diminishes the effectiveness of the United Nations," said Margers Pinnis of the Baltic Appeal to the United Nations, one organization seeking United Nations help in winning self-determination for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Ojars E. Kalnins, spokesman for the Latvian American Association, called the United Nations decision "outrageous," saying it "follows a pattern of craven surrender to the Soviets."

Ginte Damusis of the Lithuanian Information Center said "it is scandalous to see United Nations officials running scared of Moscow."

Contacts Are Ended

Baltic Americans say the contacts were with the Office of Research and the Collection of Information, a division of the Secretariat headed by Mr. Jonah that briefs Secretary General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar on world trouble spots where he might be asked to

mediate. Officials of that division confirmed today that the contacts had ended, as Mr. Jonah said in the interview.

"Mr. Jonah's position is illogical," Mr. Pinnis said. "His office should keep up with events in the Baltic region because all the nationalist movements say the United Nations may have a role to play in securing a peaceful transition to independence."

The Soviet Union, which opposes independence for the Baltic republics while admitting their annexation was illegal, apparently considers that such contacts not only encourage the nationalist movements but also constitute interference in its internal affairs, officials say.

Under its charter the United Nations is barred from interfering in members' internal affairs, although the organization is pressing that prohibition as it sets international standards in fields like human rights and environmental protection.